

Name: Warren T. Towler
Resident of: Newington, CT
Organization: 4C's SEIU 1973

Subject: Testimony to Higher Education Appropriations Hearing

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Warren T. Towler and I am a resident of Newington, CT.

I am a member of Recovery for All- a statewide coalition bringing together more than sixty community, faith, and labor organizations across Connecticut. I am also a member of 4C's-SEIU Local 1973

Today, I am testifying to urge you to increase the block grant for the CSCU system to improve educational services for our students and address long-standing inequities in our CSCU workforce.

Since 2011, I have been an Adjunct Professor at Capital Community College. Economics is my primary discipline, but over the course of my academic career I have led classes in American Government, African American History, and First Year Experience. My greatest learning experience is realizing teaching is more of a calling than a job. We are instrumental in shaping the critical and creative thinking skills for the next generation.

Adjunct professors comprise upwards of 70% of the teaching faculty in Connecticut's community colleges. With such a sizeable majority, there are noticeable inequities. First I've coined the phrase "Academic Nomads" to define Adjunct instructors as we migrate from one semester, hopefully to another. There is no guarantee of sustainable employment. We can be "bumped" from a class if a full-time colleague has a deficit. We also do not qualify for unemployment compensation if we have a class(es) scheduled for an upcoming semester.

My focus today is the topic of health care. Capping adjunct work just below the threshold of eligibility for health benefits really hit home in the Fall of 2019. I was hospitalized and subsequently in rehabilitation for the majority of the Fall semester. Paychecks ceased in October. Had it not been for HUSKY-D, I do not know how my family would have fared. For the first time, my family was on Medicaid and EBT (food stamps). After 28 years in corporate America I sum it up "EBT with advanced degrees!" I learned that I am not an outlier, many of my adjunct colleagues face the same challenges. For this alone, the block grant should be expanded to provide health insurance (as our full-time colleagues enjoy) for those who also train the succeeding generations

I therefore urge you to fully fund our public higher education system this legislative session. Such a worthwhile investment into our system will lead to real equity for our students and our workforce.

Thank you for investing time to hear my story and I hope it sheds light on an area in need of attention.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren T Towler